DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 092 251 PS 007 370

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TITLE Training Child Care Workers in Denmark: II. Training Family Helpers and Family Day Care Mothers.
INSTITUTION Copenhagen Univ. (Denmark). Inst. of Social Medicine.
PUB DATE [74]
NOTE 9p.; For related documents, see PS 007 366-369 and 371

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Child Care Workers; Comparative Analysis; Curriculum Design; Educational Finance; Federal State Relationship; *Inservice Programs; *Paraprofessional School Personnel; *Program Descriptions; *Training Objectives
IDENTIFIERS *Denmark

ABSTRACT

This report describes the training of two kinds of paraprofessionals in child care in Denmark: the family helper who has considerable educational background, and the family day care mother for whom there are no educational prerequisites. The funding, the training, and the curriculum design of the paraprofessional programs are discussed. There is an important cooperative relationship between the central government and the local government in the training program, with the central government setting the standards and evolving the curriculum, and the local government retaining complete responsibility for recruiting workers. The training programs have attracted a large number of well-qualified participants. Refresher and supplementary courses play a vital role. (CS)

ED 092251

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# TRAINING CHILD CARE WORKERS IN DENMARK:

## II. Training Family Helpers and Family Day Care Mothers

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PS 007320

A previous report "Training Child Care Workers in Denmark: I. Group Day Care Workers" described the training of a professional in the child care field--the group day care worker. This report will describe the training of two paraprofessionals in child care in Denmark: the Family Helper with considerable educational background; and the Family Day Care Mother for whom there are no educational prerequisites--a lay worker. Both of these paraprofessionals are more recent innovations, both are now widely used and both have rapidly become important additions to workers for children in Denmark.

## Training the Family Helper

In a previous report we described Denmark's system of Family Help. When, in response to obvious community need, Denmark decided to set up its family guidance program, registered social workers were the people thought most qualified to do the job. There was, however, not nearly enough trained social workers available. Faced with the choice of either abandoning the program--and the need--or training paraprofessionals to meet it, Denmark chose the latter.

Family helpers are recruited by the local Township in which they live. First an attempt is made to attract qualified social workers. At present approximately 20 percent of all family helpers are social workers (who are exempt from the basic training to be described). Forty percent of those recruited are graduates from one of the seminariums which trains group day care workers

(see previous report). Another 15 percent are registered nurses or public health nurses. The above groups, which form 75 percent of the recruits, are considered to have excellent basic backgrounds. The other 25 percent are graduates in home economics or other fields where their background training is related but not as germane to the job.

After a series of interviews the applicants are hired by the township and placed on the payroll. They are then enrolled in the 15 week basic course. This course is organized and presented by the National Department of Child and Youth Affairs. The course is a "traveling course"--that is, it is given at one of the five Schools of Social Work scattered across Denmark, rotating from school to school so that the course will be given in each area from time to time. The National Department notifies all townships in an area that the course will be coming to their area on a certain date so that recruits can be hired in time for the course.

The student-recruits travel to the school where the course is given and live there for the duration of the course unless their home is within commuting distance. They are not allowed to have any other work while attending the course. Course lectures and discussions are given mornings and afternoons five days a week and the students have a long list of required readings.

Teachers for the course are drawn from three groups: faculty from the School of Social Work where the course is given, staff from the National Department, and outside experts. Teachers include many professional disciplines: social work, psychology, psychiatry, medicine, public health, law, education, business administration, economics.

The National Department of Child and Youth Affairs is responsible for the course curriculum and has revised it gradually from time to time. The curriculum of the latest

course given is as follows:

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| Child and Youth welfare | 50 hours |
| Social rights, including public rights, sick insurance, child subsidy, adult subsidy, accident insurance, work insurance | 40 hours |
| Law, including family law, criminal law, civil law, tax law, building law | 62 hours |
| Social medicine | 20 hours |
| Psychology | 26 hours |
| Adult psychiatry | 18 hours |
| Child psychiatry | 10 hours |
| Institional services, including care of the handicapped, services for mothers, vocational guidance, mental retardation, alcoholism, drug users, rehabilitation, day institutions, residential institutions | 52 hours |
| Interview techniques and client management | 54 hours |
| Budget planning | 8 hours |
| Visits to institutions | 58 hours |
| Group work | 20 hours |
| TOTAL | 420 hours |

The 420 hours of instruction are given over 15 weeks--an intensive period of study. It is important to remember that this basic course is seen by the Danes, not as a basic education, but as an "afterbuilding" on an already basic education.

At the completion of the course the family helpers return to their township where they begin their work, backed up and supervised by a team of professionals. They are on a six month probation to be certain that they will be able to satisfactorily perform this type of work. At the end of the probation period they are full-fledged

family helpers and may join the national union of family helpers.

The training of family helpers does not end with the basic course and the inservice training provided by their professional team. They are required by law to attend refresher courses, again at the expense of their township and again presented by the National Department. After two years of work the first refresher course is given: a one week live-in course which again rotates around Denmark. Two days of the week are devoted to bringing the family helpers up to date on laws and regulations. The remainder of the week is devoted to work with group dynamics. One year later, after three years of work, the family helpers are required to attend a two week live-in refresher course. Again one year later, after four years of work, another two week refresher course is required. At the time of writing no family helpers have been on the job more than four years but it is expected that the refresher courses will continue to be given to the more experienced family helpers.

A career ladder exists for this new paraprofessional. A trained family helper who has performed well on the job may apply to attend one of the schools of social work in Denmark to become a qualified social worker. The usual prerequisites are, if necessary, waived as it is felt that this applicant has proved his ability to excell at this type of service.

## Training the Family Day Care Mother

In an earlier report we described the system of family day care homes in Denmark. There are no educational requirements for the family day care mothers recruited for this system other than the Danish equivalent of a high school diploma. After interviews, checking of health

records and inspection of the home the family day care mother is hired and starts work without any special training. Her informal on-the-job training including the regular visits to her home by her supervisor and occasional evening meetings of the supervisor with several day care mothers has been reviewed in our earlier report.

A meeting was held recently at the National Ministry of Education to discuss ways to increase the training of these lay child care workers. At this meeting it was decided to develop a basic inservice training course for family day care mothers. The following statements were issued with regards to the course: 1) Most townships have a family day care system and wish to have a training course for day care mothers. The organization of family day care mothers has expressed interest in such a course. 2) The course will be given official recognition by the Ministry of Education. 3) The goal of the course will be to give the day care mother an "elementary view" of children's needs and the importance of a healthy upbringing and a stimulating environment." The course is not expected to make a professional expert of this lay worker but those who successfully complete the course will be given a certificate. 4) The costs of the course will be borne by the local township. There will be no prerequisites for those attending the course.

In addition to issueing the above statements, the Ministry of Education also issued a recommended curriculum for this basic course as follows:

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| Course introduction, including day care mothers duties and rights | 3 hours |
| Infant and preschool child health, including nutrition, the sick child, dental care, first aid and safety | 12 hours |

PS 007370

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| Normal child psychology, including normal growth and development, the problem child | 18 hours |
| Practical early childhood education, including planning the child's day, arrangement of rooms, receiving children into care, "normal difficulties with normal children", parent contact and communication | 12 hours |
| Children's activities, including the importance of play, the use of everyday inexpensive materials, rhythms, dramatics, singing | 12 hours |
| Social welfare, including family information child and youth welfare, social help institutions, insurance | 12 hours |
| TOTAL | 69 hours |

The Ministry of Education also recommended the development of supplementary courses to be offered to day care mothers after completion of the basic course. To date, three supplementary courses have been given official approval by the Ministry: a 30 hour course on "Working relationships," including the day care mother's relationship to parents, children, institutions and other groups; a 12 hour course on the handicapped child including visual handicaps, movement handicaps, speech and hearing handicaps, and the problems families experience with these children; a 12 hour course on early educational activities including use of animals, books, etc.

At present these training courses for day care mothers have been recommended to the townships but are not mandatory. Some townships, however, have already begun the courses. One example is the Township of Copenhagen. In Copenhagen,

the 69 hour basic course has been incorporated into their regular adult evening school system. The family day care supervisors encourage as many day care mothers as possible to attend. The course is free of charge and the mothers are given transportation money. Different professionals serve as teachers for the various subject areas described above. The response of both the township and the day care mothers to this training program has been enthusiastic.

## Implications for the United States

The training programs for these two paraprofessionals are quite new--one is four years old and the other is one year old--and yet they have a number of implications for America. The use of paraprofessionals in the U.S. is just beginning and training programs for them are very few. What can we learn, so far, from this Danish experience?

1) Denmark has again demonstrated the value of the empirical evolution of a training program for child care workers. With both programs described in this report, the service in question was begun either prior to or simultaneously with the training program. Changes in the training program are gradually made as more experience is gained both with the service and with the training.

2) There is an important cooperative relationship between the central government and the local government in these training programs. The central government sets the standards, evolves the curriculum and, in some cases, sends its own traveling course around the country. The local government, however, retains complete responsibility for recruiting workers (hiring and firing), for seeing that the workers obtain and are paid for their basic training and their supplementary training, and for providing on-the-job training and supervision.

3) The feasibility of training paraprofessionals to rapidly fill a gap in child care has been shown. Even with this limited amount of training, these two paraprofessionals in Denmark have been accepted both by professionals in the child care field and by the consumers.

4) Different levels of paraprofessionals can be trained. In this report we have seen an already well educated person trained as a paraprofessional through "afterbuilding" and we have seen a lay person given "elementary views" to improve his performance as a paraprofessional.

5) From the beginning Denmark has seen the training of paraprofessionals as a continous process with frequent refresher courses and supplementary courses.

6) Training programs for paraprofessionals can attract qualified people. Both highly educated people and lay people can wish to begin a new career.